

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) An analytical system for facilitating decision making by generating and accessing arguments, wherein each of the arguments supports an associated conclusion as to whether a given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the analytical system comprising:

a database for storing a plurality of templates, each of the plurality of templates including a plurality of queries which when responded to generate a particular argument supporting an associated conclusion regarding a particular situation, the associated conclusion based on responses to associated template queries, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates is relevant to the given situation; and

an argument server coupled to the database and comprising:

means for a user to select one of the plurality of templates which is most relevant to the given situation from among the at least one of the plurality of templates that is relevant to the given situation;

means for receiving responses to one or more queries of the one of the plurality of templates from said user, where each of said responses is associated with a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the one or more queries;

means for discovering information to aid said user in responding to said one or more queries, said means for discovering linking said argument server to an external data source;

means for receiving supporting evidence from said user in response to said one or more queries of the one of the plurality of templates, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the responses;

means for associating said supporting evidence received from said user with said responses to said one or more queries;

means for evaluating said responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result associated with each of said responses, to determine a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

means for generating a new an argument supporting [[a]] the conclusion of the evaluating, the new argument comprising the one of the plurality of templates, the responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

means for publishing said new argument, including said one of the plurality of templates, said responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review.

2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more queries are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query.
4. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to associate a rationale with each of the responses.
5. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein input to one or more of the one or more queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.
6. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 5, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow one or more of the plurality of users to

generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

7. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 6, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.
8. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each of the one or more queries is a multiple choice question.
9. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 8, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.
10. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.
11. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein the plurality of queries associated with each of the plurality templates are formed in a first hierarchical structure, wherein the argument server is further configured to automatically answer a parent query having a plurality of children queries based on responses to- children queries of the parent query.
12. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow more than one response for each of the plurality of queries.
13. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the parent query is automatically answered using a response technique selected by a user.

14. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 13, wherein the response technique is selected from a group consisting of comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

15. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein each response within the first hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color of the subset of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure convey a line of reasoning.

16. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein one or more of the plurality of queries is associated with a second hierarchical structure of queries and the first hierarchical structure and the second hierarchical structure together form a set of cascaded arguments.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of templates is associated with a situation descriptor and the argument server selects one of the plurality of templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of templates to thereby find a most relevant one of the plurality of templates having a situation descriptor that most closely matches the given situation.

19. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow creation of a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for facilitating decision making by accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the method using a processor to perform steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates includes a plurality of queries, and wherein at least one of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from among the at least one of the plurality of searchable templates that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

receiving from said user one or more responses to one or more queries of the relevant template, where each of said one or more responses is associated with a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the one or more queries and wherein one or more of the one or more queries has an associated discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to the one or more of the one or more queries;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said one or more queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more responses;

associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of said one or more queries for which a response has been received;

evaluating said one or more responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result associated with each of said one or more responses, to determine a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

forming a new argument supporting [[a]] the conclusion of the evaluating, the new argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said new argument, including said relevant template, said one or more responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, further comprising associating a rationale provided by said user to each of said one or more queries for which a response has been received.
23. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, wherein the plurality of queries associated with each of the plurality of searchable templates is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query.
24. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, wherein input to one or more of the one or more queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.
25. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 24, the method further comprising allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.
26. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.
27. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, wherein each of the one or more queries is a multiple choice question.
28. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 27, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.
29. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 28, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of

responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.

30. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 28, wherein each of the plurality of queries associated with each of the plurality of searchable templates is formed in a first hierarchical structure, the method further comprising automatically answering a parent query having a plurality of children queries based on responses to the children queries of the parent.

31. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 30, the method further comprising receiving more than one response for at least one of the plurality of queries.

32. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the parent query is automatically responded to using a response technique selected by a user.

33. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the response technique is selected from a group ~~consisting-of~~ comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

34. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 30, wherein each response within the first hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each of the plurality of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure convey a line of reasoning.

35. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 30, wherein one or more of the plurality of queries is associated with a second hierarchical structure of queries and the first hierarchical structure and the second hierarchical structure together form a set of cascaded arguments.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates is associated with a situation descriptor, the method further comprising selecting one of the plurality of searchable templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of searchable templates to thereby find most relevant ones of the plurality of searchable templates having situation descriptors that most closely match the given situation.

38. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 20, the method further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

39. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium containing program instructions for facilitating decision making by accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the computer readable medium comprising:

computer code for presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates includes a plurality of queries, and wherein at least one of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

computer code for receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from among the at least one of the plurality of searchable templates that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

computer code for receiving from said user one or more responses to one or more queries of the relevant template, where each of said one or more responses is associated with a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the one or more queries and wherein one or more of the one or more queries has an associated discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to the one or more of the one or more queries;

computer code for receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to

said one or more queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more responses;

computer code for associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of the one or more queries for which a response has been received;

computer code for evaluating said one or more responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result associated with each of said one or more responses, to determine a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

computer code for forming a new an argument supporting [[a]] the conclusion of the evaluating, the new argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion;

computer code for publishing said new argument, including said relevant template, said one or more responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review; and

a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.

40. (Currently Amended) A computer system operable facilitate decision making by accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the computer system comprising:

one or more processors;

one or more memory coupled to the one or more processors, wherein at least one of the processors and memory are adapted to:

present to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates includes a plurality of queries, and wherein at least one of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receive from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from among the at least one of the plurality of searchable templates that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

receive from the user one or more responses to one or more queries of the relevant template, where each of said one or more responses is associated with a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the one or more queries and wherein one or more of the one or more queries has an associated discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to the one or more of the one or more queries;

receive from the user supporting evidence in response to the one or more queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more responses;

associate the supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of the one or more responses;

evaluate the one or more responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result associated with each of said one or more responses, to determine a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

form a new an argument supporting [[a]] the conclusion as to indicating whether the given situation is likely to have a positive or negative result, the new argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publish the new argument, including the relevant template, one or more responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion, for review.